## *Problematising strategic internationalisation*

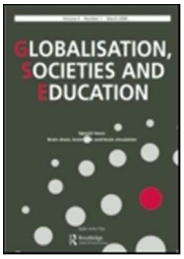
O'Connor, Sinead

*Published in:*
Globalisation, Societies and Education

*DOI:*
10.1080/14767724.2017.1413979

*Publication date:*
2017

*Citation for published version (APA):*
O'Connor, S. (2017). Problematising strategic internationalisation: Tensions and conflicts between international student recruitment and integration policy in Ireland. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, (3 ), 339-352. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2017.1413979




# Problematizing strategic internationalisation: tensions and conflicts between international student recruitment and integration policy in Ireland

| | |
|---|---|
| Journal: | *Globalisation, Societies and Education* |
| Manuscript ID | Draft |
| Manuscript Type: | Special Issue Article |
| Keywords: | Higher Education, Student Mobility, Social Inclusion, Ireland, Internationalisation, Integration |
| | |

**Abstract**

Internationalisation of higher education in Ireland has been identified as a pathway to economic recovery through encouraging student mobility and attracting highly skilled human capital. International students constitute one element of recent Irish immigration trends, presenting new challenges for a society in which diversity is a relatively recent phenomenon. In this light, here I explore the contradictions and tensions that arise from the drive to recruit international students with the need to embed policies that enshrine the integration of migrants more broadly. As highly-skilled migrants, international students are often perceived as 'the best and the brightest', who exhibit high levels of social and human capital. However, they occupy a contradictory position within a hierarchy that values the economic investment they make in Irish education, but categorises them into a fixed identity that does not recognise the diversity of needs to better facilitate their social inclusion. Analysing both government migration policies and university recruitment strategies reveals how policies at different scales shape hierarchies of desirability, wherein students are appraised for revenue generation but subject to surveillance, racialisation, increasing restrictions and divisive rhetoric depending on their status as non-EU students. To address this imbalance requires the implementation of holistic internationalisation strategies and migration policies.

Keywords: Higher education, student mobility, social inclusion, Ireland, internationalisation, integration



## Introduction

Irish society has witnessed unprecedented social change over the last two decades, as the economy underwent rapid and sustained growth, bringing with it a reversal of long-established outward migration trends. During this period, immigration to Ireland has encompassed economic immigrants, asylum seekers and international students, resulting in a dramatic increase of diversity in Irish society (Glynn 2014). This diversification is enhanced by Ireland beginning to assert itself in the international education mobility sector, attracting

greater numbers of full-time, fee-paying international students from regions outside of the EU, and indeed, prioritising these flows over non-fee paying students. Today, internationalisation strategies have become central features of university development initiatives in order to enhance their international profiles, while mitigating the effects of significant cuts to exchequer funding. In tandem with this growth, the Irish government has sought to fill particular labour needs, shaping migration flows to Ireland in order to meet economic imperatives. As a result, certain 'hierarchies' of immigrants have emerged, encouraging migration flows that are able to contribute to those highly-skilled and tolerating less 'desirable' migrants or those who are able to contribute to economic growth (Gilmartin 2015; McDowell 2009). This paper explores the contested position international students maintain within this hierarchy, as they represent both economic and social value through positioning Ireland and its universities as cosmopolitan, diversity-friendly spaces. Such hierarchies also serve to obscure international students' experiences of racialisation and other barriers to their inclusion, which remain under-explored in institutional contexts. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature of international student experiences in smaller contexts like Ireland, where multiculturalism is a recent demographic feature of society.

International students have often been perceived as an invisible and transitory category of migrant (Findlay 2011). They are frequently positioned as consumers whose priorities centre on attaining (a western) education (Waters 2012; Madge *et al* 2015). Assumed by governments to be 'the best and the brightest' and as a lucrative source of potential skilled labour, the supposedly unproblematic nature of international students is evident (Riaño and Piguet 2016). In this paper, I adopt a more critical approach. Building on King and Raghuram's (2013) argument that conceptualisations of international student migration must move beyond limiting categorisations of students, this work contributes to studies of internationalisation through connecting university and government policy to the lived experiences of international students in Ireland. Drawing on their everyday, lived experiences in Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), I demonstrate the tensions that arise from the piecemeal and limited nature of these policies, arguing that the social inclusion and integration of students and migrants requires a broader cultural shift that recognises multiple identities. Linking policy to the everyday geographies of students contributes to a more complex conceptualisation of international student mobility.

**Contextualising migration and integration in Europe: establishing hierarchies of desirability**

In recent years, European nations have become increasingly concerned with controlling migration flows in particular those of non-European Union immigrants (Joppke 2007). Issues of socio-economic inequality, racism, xenophobia, and perceptions of migrants and minorities living 'parallel lives' have also become prominent features of discourses surrounding immigration as well as policy responses to it (Phillips 2006; Castles *et al* 2015). European states such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France have been associated with particular integration models – multiculturalism and assimilation – yet recent times have seen such states beset by a sense of failure in the face of rising populism and the continued marginalisation of immigrants and their descendants (Joppke 2007). The relationship between migration control and integration has often privileged the former; as Joppke (2007: 1) asserts in the case of France: "state attention had always been fixated on refining instruments of immigration control", while integration policy remained 'badly defined in its objectives and principles', 'incoherent', 'contradictory' and 'insufficient' (Cour des Comptes 2004: 9f). This contradiction between migration control and integration as they co-exist in policy is also outlined by Gilmartin (2015: 26):

> The desire to treat people equally and to foster social togetherness comes into conflict with the desire to protect the state and its citizens. In the conflict, it is often immigrants who lose out.

The knowledge economy has further delineated migrant entry conditions, as highly-educated migrants are given priority of access to enter the state (Gilmartin 2015). They are valued as a source of human capital, and furthermore, for their perceived capacity to integrate quickly (Shachar 2006). Ireland has followed other EU states to some extent in recreating these classifications of 'desirable' and 'undesirable' migrants in accordance with skills, language competence and economic value. Such hierarchies are further inscribed by 'whiteness', whereby white immigrants experience greater privilege in the 'hierarchy of acceptability' (McDowell 2009). McDowell (2009) asserts that this categorisation of desirability permeates migration management and labour recruitment. Whiteness –

mediated by class, gender, religion, age, language, etc. – is thus another aspect through which such hierarchies reassert themselves, for example, through the general assumption that white immigrants will find integrating more straightforward. International students, as a heterogeneous and highly-educated category of migrants, inhabit a contested position within such hierarchies (Gilmartin 2015). On one hand, they are privileged through their status as highly educated and generally, their language competence. On the other hand, this must not presume that students are not subject to racialisation and social exclusion, particularly as many non-EU students are non-white, thus requiring policy intervention to create opportunities for their inclusion. Recognising the heterogeneity of international students means we must analyse further how their lived experiences are mediated by frameworks that privilege certain characteristics in order to move beyond thinking of them as an "unproblematic category of mover" (Findlay 2011: 171).

**Situating migration and integration policy in Ireland**

Ireland's economic prosperity began in the 1990s and transformed long-standing migration trends: having historically been associated with high levels of emigration, it became a country of net immigration for the first time in 1996, the last EU country to do so (Ruhs 2009). While Ireland had not been entirely homogenous to that point, the newfound prosperity of the 1990s marked a seminal moment where new minorities were becoming increasingly visible in Irish society (Lentin 2008; MacEinri 2007; MacEinri and White 2008). In the 2011 Census, a growth of 143% of non-Irish nationals was recorded between 2002 and 2011, expanding from 5.8% to 12% of the population (CSO 2014). The demographic features of diversity in Ireland have radically changed. For decades, UK nationals had been the largest minority in Ireland, but they have now been superseded by Polish nationals. A marked increase was also noted in the number of non-EU students arriving in Ireland during this period, with a growth of 49% between 2005 and 2008 (Ruhs 2009: 3). Simply put, diversity is becoming a more prominent feature of Irish society. The recent and rapid nature of this change makes Ireland unique in comparison to its neighbouring countries, many of whom have a longer legacy of post-war immigration and integration policy. As a result,

integration policy has often focused on promoting the rights of Irish emigrants living abroad, while encouraging return migration (Gray 2006).

Reflecting the changes taking place in Irish society, in 2008, the Ministry of State for Integration was established and published a comprehensive report outlining the deficiencies of legislation and funding for migrant integration. The report adopted a broadly inter-culturalist approach, focusing on promoting language skills, fostering intercultural dialogue in communities, as well as promoting intercultural competence through schools, workplaces, etc. (Glynn 2014). It published a number of worthwhile suggestions, which were wide-ranging and intended to work at diverse scales, for example, through increasing funding for English language provision in schools, as well as for Local Authorities, sporting organisations, NGOs and other support services. To date, none of these initiatives have been implemented. In 2008, austerity took hold; despite relatively stable levels of immigration during this time, the issue of integration was largely shelved (Gilmartin 2015). Unemployment tripled in 2010 and the emigration of Irish adults reached record levels (Glynn 2014; Glynn *et al* 2013). Fluctuating levels of emigration from Ireland, combined with austerity and high unemployment, have long been a political concern for a government mindful of the loss of human capital in tough economic circumstances, resulting in the prioritisation of promoting the return of Irish emigrants once more. Consequently, responses to the experiences of diversity in Ireland have been reactionary, as Boucher argues below:

> [Ireland's absence of a co-ordinated integration policy]…is more about maintaining social cohesion and social order by individual immigrants adapting to the existing Irish national society, rather than the government or Irish society adapting to the changes arising from immigration and cultural diversity. It also defines integration in terms of facilitating Irish national social cohesion and social order, by encouraging immigrants to individually integrate by themselves through de facto assimilation, not by retaining their own cultural identity. (2008: 13)

The absence of a methodical, thoughtful integration policy that explicates the values underpinning Irish society's stance on its recent diversification has led to this 'de facto assimilation'. While the UK has been associated with a multicultural approach that

encourages recognition and respect for multiple identities – for example, respecting the customs, practices or beliefs of one's religion – Ireland has not outlined a specific policy that reflects such a position toward diversity whereby the right to difference is enshrined. There is still no over-arching framework that embeds the requirement that diverse identities must be recognised at all scales; in schools, workplaces, etc. Although the rhetoric of inter-culturalism and respect for difference was adopted, none of the necessary incentives or funding have been put in place, leaving a vacuum in which migrant individuals must adapt themselves to the majority culture.

The response to immigration and the integration of migrants in Ireland has been largely reactive and fragmentary in nature. This is evident still by the absence of a nationally co-ordinated integration strategy. In recent years, the economic recession has also accelerated the desire to increase student recruitment (ICOS 2013). As students are subject to national management policies and official immigration procedures, their everyday lives and experiences of social inclusion are subject to the regulations of policy that responsible for promoting integration and inclusion. Improving national policy may lead to substantial changes to the overall student experience, to student mobility flows and to the opportunities of students to remain in Ireland post-graduation. For internationalisation strategies to effectively work towards the social inclusion of students requires a deeper and more critical engagement with the changes that have arisen from mobility to Ireland, specifically building a culture that recognises and supports the diverse identities present in Ireland today.



## Methodology

This paper draws on quantitative and qualitative data gathered from doctoral thesis research investigating the geographies of international students and their experiences of inter-cultural interaction at a University in the Republic of Ireland in 2012. Due to the sensitivity of information presented and to protect the anonymity of interviewees, the University is not named. It draws upon data retrieved from an extensive online survey sent to 806 full-time, non-EU international students (with a response rate of 23%), 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews with students from across the international student body, and 6

interviews with international education support and recruitment staff, campus accommodation management and the Director for the Student Experience. Non-EU students were chosen as a sample because the majority of EU students are ERASMUS and stay in the country for a maximum of one year, while non-EU students pursue degrees. As non-EU students pay much higher fees than EU and Irish students, they are also the primary focus of internationalisation strategies. For the purpose of the research, extensive content analysis of internationalisation strategies and policies related to international students was carried out. These were drawn from a range of sources, including the internationalisation strategies of the Republic of Ireland's major Universities[1] and publications pertaining to international student mobility from the Irish Council for International Students (ICOS)[2], the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Department of Education and Skills.

International students are often homogenised as a singular identity (King and Raghuram 2013) and so to speak to a multiplicity of identities, the study drew on students from a wide range of backgrounds; the majority of survey respondents were from the USA (28%), Malaysia (27%) and China (13%), with 22 countries represented in total. Seventy-one percent of the survey respondents were undergraduates, primarily studying medicine and other science subjects. The interview participants were recruited through the survey and are representative of that sample, again, most of whom are from the USA, Malaysia and China respectively. They are non-EU nationals, and these students were sought out because they committed to studying in Ireland for at least three years. Sixty-eight percent (17) of the participants were female. They ranged in age from 17 – 49 with a median age of 22. The survey and interviews aimed to engage with students' feelings of belonging, and how their encounters with others in private and public spaces in the city and university contributed to their inclusion and /or exclusion. Ethical approval was acquired, and as an Irish, English-speaking researcher engaging with diverse cultures, I was mindful of the need to consistently reflect on my own positionality in relation to the participants. The interviews lasted between one and two hours, were conducted in English, and were audio-recorded

[1] University College Cork; University of Limerick; Trinity College Dublin; University College Dublin; National University of Ireland Galway; NUI Maynooth

[2] ICOS advocates for the rights of international students and makes recommendations for internationalisation policies; it is not state-funded.

with the participants' permission. They were coded using NVIVO software, while the survey data was analysed using SPSS software.

Choosing a case study allows the researcher to engage with specific theories, while understanding how those materialise and are influenced by their geographical situation (Yin 2003). The data gathered from the University studied, although specific to one case study, represents the localised experiences of internationalisation and of student mobility and integration at a specific institutional scale. As this work is concerned with engaging with the relationship between national and institutional policy, this case study allows for the analysis of how national policies have influenced practices directly engaged with students' education and their everyday lived experiences, providing qualitative depth to the lived outcomes of specific policies.

**The National Strategic Value of International Students in Ireland**

International students – particularly full-time, non-EU students – represent part of the recent wave of highly-skilled migrants moving to Ireland. Internationalisation of Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has been recognised as a potential avenue of economic recovery, contributing significantly to university revenue – but also to the economy more generally – in the desire to position Ireland as a leader in the provision of high-level education (ICOS 2013). Revenue is generated through their tuition fees; Irish students' tuition fees are subsidised by the government, but they pay an annual registration fee of approx. €3,000. Tuition fees for international students depend on the institution and programme, varying between €9,750 – €20,000 for an Arts and Humanities degree, and €45,000 – €52,000 to study Medicine (Education in Ireland 2017).

Table One shows the proportion of international students at each of Ireland's Universities. University College Dublin ('Ireland's Global University') maintains the highest proportion of international students in its student body, and is also involved in a number of collaborative degree programs in overseas campuses in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China (UCD 2015). The figure of 10% at University of Limerick represents full-time students

and excludes ERASMUS and JYA (Junior Year Abroad)[3]. The most recent profile of University College Cork (2014) states that there are 3,000 international students, without distinguishing between short-term visiting (such as ERASMUS and JYA) and full-time students. In actuality, this figure does not represent the number of fee-paying students enrolled, but is used in such a way as to reinforce the marketing of UCC as a diverse and international campus (Brooks and Waters 2014).

[Insert *Table One: Proportion of International Students in Irish Universities* here]

Between the academic years 2010/2011 and 2014/2015, there was an increase of almost 10,000 international students from outside the EU studying in Ireland (Department of Education and Skills 2016: 52). The following table illustrates the origin by domicile of these students:

[Insert *Table Two: International Students by Domicile or Origin 2010/2011 and 2014/2015* here]

As the chart illustrates, Asia has clearly been the source of significant growth and student recruitment for Irish universities in the last number of years. Internationalisation strategies have focused on marketing a western education in an English-speaking country in order to increase student recruitment from China and India particularly. The strategic value that is placed on international students is evident in government strategies which seek to intensify internationalisation of Irish Higher Education. The National Strategy for Education 2030 (2011: 81) outlines this importance:

> From the national perspective, international education can be seen as an investment in Ireland's global relationships… The higher education system has a crucial role to play in promoting Ireland's international profile, forging strategic links with partners overseas, reinforcing ties with Ireland's diaspora and developing a new global network of influence among Irish-educated alumni who will act as advocates and agents for Irish interests in parts of the world where we have not traditionally had strong links.

[3] These are short-term exchange programmes which typically involve three months to a year of study abroad

This perspective aligns with the type of 'strategic cosmopolitanism' outlined by Katherine Mitchell, where diversity is harnessed as a tool to remain globally competitive at the expense of "the creation of the tolerant, multicultural self" (2003: 387). Such perspectives have been critiqued for intensifying the commodification of education at the expense of fostering other benefits of internationalization (DeVita and Case 2003). The National Strategy for 2030 also refers to the need for a holistic approach to student recruitment and support, including the integration of students during their studies. However, this is not defined, and methods of supporting integration are not outlined. Encouraging the retention of international students as a potentially vital source of human capital after graduation is also neglected.

The theme of becoming part of an international network of Irish alumni is expanded on in the most recent strategy by the Department of Education and Skills: 'Irish educated, Globally Connected', 2016-2020, which aims to increase the value of Ireland's international education sector to €2.1b by 2020 from its current value of €1.58b (Department of Education and Skills 2016). It estimates that the average total international students spend annually on non-tuition items, such as rent, food and socialising is approximately €182m (Department of Education and Skills 2016: 19). Increasing recruitment by 33% is the primary goal of this strategy, bringing the proportion of international students across Irish Higher Education Institutions to 15%, while increasing the significant revenue students already generate. Students are allowed to work for up to 20 hours a week during term, and up to 40 hours during the summer break, making them "inadvertent migrant workers" (Gilmartin 2015: 64). In comparison to the National Strategy, it does make reference to encouraging "high performing students" to remain according to specific labour needs and language skills they fulfil.

However, while there is an emphasis on increasing student numbers, they are still subject to broader policies of migration restriction. Anxieties about bogus language schools has led to tightened access to education; the doubling of visa renewal fees to €300 in 2012, placing greater costs on immigration registration, is but one example. Similar to recent measures adopted in the UK, others include limiting the number of programmes open to non-EEA (European Economic Area) students, inspections, and increasing the mandatory number of hours non-EEA students must attend class. Consequently, immigration policy is

used as a way of controlling student mobility and further delineating access to the desired type of student. While international students have substantial economic value to the Irish economy, symbolically, they also serve neo-liberal logic as they are showcased as evidence of Ireland's diversity-friendly, cosmopolitan credentials.

**The Strategic Value of International Students: Perspectives from an Irish University**

Building on this neo-liberal logic, in 2012, the University published strategies promising to establish a diversity-friendly campus that will "further the pluralist, multicultural yet Irish nature of the campus community" (University Strategy 2013 - 2017). These strategies focus specifically on strengthening flows of students to Ireland. Internationalisation is also used a marketing tool to represent the university as a cosmopolitan, diverse and globally-connected institution, constructing international students as the medium through which domestic students develop inter-cultural skills and cultural capital (Brooks and Waters 2014).

As a result of this recruitment, Irish universities are now characterised by much greater levels of diversity. The University presented here has recognised internationalisation as a key strategic goal, with the intention to increase the international student population from 12% to 17% by 2017. The USA, China and India are predictable markets for this recruitment, providing substantial numbers of students on campus already, but the University is also looking to expand into 'emerging markets' such as Latin America and other growing economies. The Faculty of Arts and Social Science has put strategic emphasis on doubling the number of Junior Year Abroad (JYA) from the USA at undergraduate level, and increasing the number of international doctoral students (who already make up approximately one third of their PhD students). The Faculty of Science and Engineering aim to increase the number of full time fee-paying undergraduates from Eastern Europe and other non-EU countries such as Brazil. The Faculty of Medicine and Health do not refer to internationalisation in their strategy, operating independently of the other disciplines in terms of recruitment. This reflects the absence of co-ordination in the establishment of a "diversity-friendly campus".

Other elements of internationalisation, such as fostering a global outlook, internationalising curricula, or a multicultural campus space, remain nebulous or have not

come to fruition. The Plan lists projects such as changing campus signage, anti-racism policies, inter-cultural training and peer support initiatives as the relevant steps in facilitating a "diversity-friendly campus", yet to date, these projects have not been operationalised. These recommendations mirror the inter-cultural rhetoric of inclusion adopted by the Irish government which have also not materialised. Efforts to promote students' social inclusion are lacking in specificity and scope. For comparison, in the UK, UKCISA (the UK Council for International Student Affairs), commissioned a comprehensive report evaluating research on internationalisation, data on inter-cultural interaction across UK universities, and detailed case studies of successful initiatives to promote integration of students across the University (UKCISA 2014). The 44-page report acknowledges that awareness of diversity and the promotion of inter-cultural interaction should be embedded in the culture of the institution itself. In Ireland, this has not been outlined by Strategies, and there is no comparative initiative to support inclusion in similar detail.

The absence of an effective framework through which to provide support to students has garnered criticism from staff, who were also critical of the feasibility of recruitment targets. Interviews with international education staff reveal the lack of communication between those working directly with students and those devising strategies:

> *Well I think it is probably unrealistic in many senses because... they're, very often when they're sitting down looking at strategic plans and looking into the future, there's no sense of: 'well, this might be if everything goes well'. So when we, in our original strategic plan, 2008-2013, the figures were just completely doubling them. And then you had the worst economic recession since the 1930s… So there is, from an institutional perspective - there's no point in saying otherwise, there is a disconnect between what they would like and what the reality actually is.* (Acting Head of International Education Office: Informant)

> *I would just like the systems to line up here internally, and I would like the national systems to - if you're serious about an internationalisation policy and you want to bring in more international students - then you need to provide more facilities. I would like our systems to actually take account of our international students, and I would like the national framework to actually work, as in [the Department of]*

> *Education and [the Department of] Justice to actually talk to each other.* (International Student Support Officer: Informant)

In June 2016, the University unveiled 'Internationalisation 2.0', setting out the financial imperatives now facing the university – with government funding cut by two-thirds to approximately €27m – recruitment of full-time international students is the most viable way of recuperating revenue. Internationalisation has become a symptom of the strategic cosmopolitanism that is becoming a prominent feature of Higher Education. This form of cosmopolitanism does not centre on the social inclusion of students, but rather, places a value on their presence so as to increase the social capital of domestic students while generating revenue.

**Inclusion of Students: University Policy and Support**

As outlined in previous sections, policies have failed to adopt measures recommended to facilitate the social inclusion of both migrants and international students. Despite the significant contributions of international students, actions for their social inclusion remain piecemeal and largely unfulfilled. This section engages with existing measures that have been enacted in university accommodation, illustrating the importance of using students' lived experiences to highlight weaknesses in existing policy. The experiences outlined below demonstrate that international students are also susceptible to some of the same barriers to inclusion as other migrants. I argue that an holistic understanding of internationalisation must be centred on the recognition of a multiplicity of student identities, providing specific measures for their inclusion.

Accommodation is a key site for inter-cultural contact between students (Van Mol and Michielsen 2015), and is one of few spaces where the integration of international students has been planned for. The PBSA complexes are unique in that the management attempt to affect a strategy of integration for their students, a practice that differentiates Irish campus accommodation from those of other studies, where the segregation of international students is linked to privately-developed PBSA that is almost exclusively marketed to foreign students (Fincher and Shaw 2009; 2011). In the University in question here, there are limitations to the number of co-nationals who can share apartments, with efforts made to distribute students of different nationalities relatively evenly throughout.

For example, a five bedroom apartment may have two Irish, two continental European and one North American student placed in it. This measure was adopted to prevent to the clustering of particular groups, and is described by the Manager of Campus Accommodation as being in line with the University's internationalisation strategy that aims to produce globally-minded graduates.

This approach creates problems, as there is no clear official strategy beyond hoping that mixing the students will allow international students to integrate. The exact definition of this 'integration' is not made explicit. Others have acknowledged that proximity does not necessarily foster intimacy (Valentine 2008; 2010; Fincher *et al* 2014). Accommodation, as an intensely intimate space, can then become a site of considerable contestation, and integration strategies should be keenly sensitive to the different needs of students – for example, their religious observances. The mixing strategy does not always work, which the management of campus accommodation attributes to the lack of openness of Irish students to difference, as well as the tendency of Irish students to return home every weekend:

> …*We find that a lot of Irish people do not want foreigners… We had a recent one just before Christmas - a mother said: "could we not...?"... There were two Chinese, a continental European and two Irish girls, and one of the Irish girls couldn't accept living with foreigners, and her mother rang the manager repeatedly and there were several meetings about it, and the final plea from the mother was: "could we not find some nice girls from Kerry for her to live with?"* (Informant: Manager of Campus Accommodation)

The Manager of Accommodation has inadvertently described an issue that is a significant barrier to inclusion for students and migrants; many Irish students have not been brought up in a culture where they are taught about multiculturalism or plural identities. The 'labour' of social inclusion and integration is particularly one-sided, resulting in the normalisation of assimilation on behalf of the student. In that instance, the Irish student was not willing to accommodate difference or to put in the kind of inter-cultural labour necessary to learn to negotiate difference. On another, practical level, mixing students in accommodation can isolate students because Irish students return home at weekends, and so policies to foster encounters between students should consider other spaces and

activities that might produce more equal and fruitful interactions. The time-space divergences of students' habits are felt keenly by those living in University accommodation:

> [At the weekend] *just hanging around with my Chinese friend. But that only usually happens at the weekend. Monday to Friday I just stay with my Irish room-mate but at the weekend I hang out with my Chinese friend.* (Informant: China, 20, Electrical Engineering)

> *I was definitely close to the Canadians because again, the Irish students just go home on the weekend, and in first and second year we didn't have class on Fridays, so people would go home on Thursday night or Friday morning. But even now, people are like 'how fast can I get home?' so it's really hard to make friends when you're there 4 days a week and people have extra-curriculars.* (Informant: USA, female, 24, Medicine)

Responses from the University to the divergences between students connect to wider discourse about self-segregation of migrants, showing that students – despite their relative privileges in relation to other categories of migrant – are not immune to such rhetoric. Here, the University campus accommodation manager discusses Malaysian students:

> *Then as I say, we had a lot of Malaysians, and definitely for them - they had very little interest in Irish culture - their focus was: "the government is paying us, this is an amazing opportunity, I will come to Ireland and I will study and I will give back to my community and my family and all of those who have invested in me and trusted in me". So they used - we have a private common room that you can book, there's a private one and a public one - the private one is beautifully furnished, there's a kitchenette, you can cook meals - they do their prayers in there on a Friday, the women on one side, the men on the other side, they study together on a Saturday morning, they're not interested on ANY level in mixing.*

However, the results of this mixing have resulted in the marginalisation and racialisation of students. Racialisation involves "endowing the characteristics, appearances, traditions and lifestyles attributed to groups of different 'others' with negative signifiers that are deemed to be natural or insurmountable" (Lentin 2008: xv). The clustering of Malaysian and Chinese

students on campus, particularly in PBSA, is perceived as 'self-segregation' (Fincher and Shaw 2009; 2011; Holton and Riley 2013). The university's response to this demonstrates the ways in which this issue is deemed to be inevitable, upending dominant representations of international students as unproblematic.

The Manager explicitly draws on their religious and cultural traditions as a way of reinforcing their 'otherness' while naturalising their marginalisation. They also overlook the internal diversity of the Malaysian cohort, which incorporates Malay, Indian and Chinese ethnicities, Muslims and non-Muslims. The racialisation of students elides more complex reasons for their clustering in accommodation – not to mention the role of Irish students in leaving at weekends. Survey data[4] revealed that the majority (57%) of the 53 Malaysian students surveyed agreed that they wished to become integrated into Irish University and social life. Over two-thirds of the 196 student respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the levels of interaction they experienced outside of their co-national friendships and a majority expressed a wish to experience Irish culture and to integrate with Irish people. This illustrates that international students experience similar barriers to social inclusion as other migrants, despite having strong language skills and sharing spaces with Irish students on a daily basis. Closer attention needs to be paid to the policy of mixing students together as it relates to particular nationalities, as it obscures the complexities of their experiences and equates this form of segregation with an unsurmountable problem.

The case of Canadian students here helps to illustrate how the 'hierarchy of acceptability' operates through the lens of whiteness (McDowell 2009). Malaysian students are not the only group reported to cluster; Canadian students are also described to live in significant concentration in one particular apartment complex. Many of these students are Graduate Entry Medicine students. They tend to be in their mid-to-late twenties, many are married, and they may also prefer to avoid the traditional student lifestyle (Chatterton 1999). The Manager of campus accommodation describes them thus:

> *For example here in [Campus Accommodation], we have a lot of Graduate Entry Medicine Canadians, they have their own Facebook page, they socialise together. There's another group of them around in a private complex, like a lot of them are*

[4] Students were asked to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I want to integrate into Irish society".

> *graduate entry, so some of them are married and they're leaving their spouses at home so they're not interested in hassle, really… And they come here to study obviously Graduate Entry Medicine, they want somewhere quiet, they want somewhere conducive to their study, and they don't want party central.*

Yet their dedication to study over inter-cultural interaction is not perceived as being problematic, defined as 'self-segregation' or identified as a target for purposeful mixing policies. They are accorded a greater degree of agency in their lifestyle and choice of accommodation than Malaysian students. This is an example of how the categorisation of students by the University can reinforce a distinctly racialised discourse that problematizes the presence of Malaysians as a group whose relations with others set them apart and require active management, while white western students are free to make their own choices of who to socialise or live with. Ideas about desirability of particular students – and migrants more broadly – have permeated university discourses in relation to diversity. These experiences illustrate the necessity of recognising the heterogeneity of international students. While they may be highly skilled, their opportunities for social interaction and integration are uneven. The racialisation of Malaysian students serves to highlight how universities unwittingly categorise their students along a scale of desirability that privileges whiteness (McDowell 2009; Fincher and Shaw 2011). Although international students are broadly constructed as 'unproblematic' (Findlay 2011), the findings presented here contradict such representations.

Students' experiences of accommodation also illustrate the absence of a broader culture in which tolerance for diversity is fostered. As with Irish migration policy, the rhetoric of inter-cultural dialogue has been adopted but 'de facto assimilation' is expected from the international students in question (Boucher 2008). While American students may be perceived as the kind of 'unproblematic' student referred to by Findlay (2011), they have also reported dissatisfaction with their level of social inclusion in Ireland. Below, an American student refers to the expectation of assimilation that is placed on students; integration is not presented as a two-way dialogue involving equal amounts of responsibility. She also draws attention to the role of accommodation in segregating American students:

> *I think it kind of falls on the American student a little bit to try to integrate and so there's a few Americans I know that were looking at coming over here to study and I said: "first thing, stay out of student housing, find a house to share it with somebody because it will help you integrate and don't just hang out with Americans, make yourself hang out with the Irish".* (Informant: USA, female, 26, Social Science)

This student lived with four Irish students, and deliberately avoided other American students in order to immerse herself in Irish culture, portraying inclusion as an individual responsibility. However, internationalisation should not simply function as a driver for student mobility; in a broader sense, it should foster more profound learning opportunities for the tolerance of different identities and cultures for all students (de Vita and Case 2003). Through accommodation policy, we see the contradictions that arise from mixing students to produce "globally-minded graduates", which cannot effectively foster inter-cultural skills or dialogue as it fails to engage with the majority population. This student's experience illuminates a number of contradictions in relation to policy; although a key site of interaction, accommodation is not necessarily an ideal space in which to mix students in the hope that they interact and form bonds. American students – English-speaking and predominantly white and middle class – also experience marginalisation and need support for their inclusion. Homogenising international student identities obscures these complex experiences.

**Conclusion**

This paper has sought to advance the literature of international student migration in two ways. Firstly, I advocate the recognition of the heterogeneity of the international student body. As studies – and policies – have frequently positioned international students as an unproblematic and transient category of migrant, I have sought here to present a more nuanced representation of their experiences that reveal the limitations of homogenising international students (King and Raghuram 2013). Despite generally having high language competence and levels of education, international students of various nationalities and cultural backgrounds experience similar barriers to integration as other migrants, including racialisation and marginalisation. They are not simply consumers in the Higher Education

context; many maintain a specific interest in engaging with and integrating into Irish culture. Considering their experiences and identities as more than students advances the conceptualisation of international student mobility (King and Raghuram 2013).

Second, by engaging with the experiences of international students through the lens of national and institutional policy, we see that the diversification of Irish society has been harnessed as a tool of economic recovery and a way of bolstering an imagination of Ireland as cosmopolitan and diversity-friendly. The hierarchies of acceptability that have developed around that have permeated various scales, resulting in a fragmentary and laissez-faire integration policy that places the labour of inter-cultural interaction on the immigrant/student. The University has demonstrated limited knowledge of the particular needs of some students, relegating them into fixed categories based on their nationality. They are tolerated for their economic contributions as students but not perceived as a potential source of human and social capital after their period of study has come to an end. There are no 'Study-to-work' programmes to facilitate the retention of their skills and cultural capital. While changes have been made to allow international students to remain in Ireland up to one year post-graduation, in order to stay, they are required to find employment. As noted by Gilmartin (2015: 64) –

> Time as a student is time apart, offering partial access to Irish society, but in exchange for significant economic investment. The work that students do is a crucial aspect of their contribution and their experience but it is subjugated to their status as students.

The drive to encourage 'highly-skilled' immigrants reinforces the 'hierarchy of acceptability' (McDowell 2009). However, international students occupy a distinct and contradictory place within this hierarchy. As a complex and diverse group, they upend certain expectations with regard to integration, particularly as the highly-skilled may still experience racialisation and similar obstacles to integration as other migrants. Exploring the experiences of international students can demonstrate the contradictory construction of the 'highly-skilled', and the uneven consequences of the interplay of national and institutional policies in their everyday lives. While the scope of this paper limits discussion to students' experiences of

accommodation, further research may explore in more detail other spaces of interaction and broader limitations to integration to students and other highly-skilled migrants.

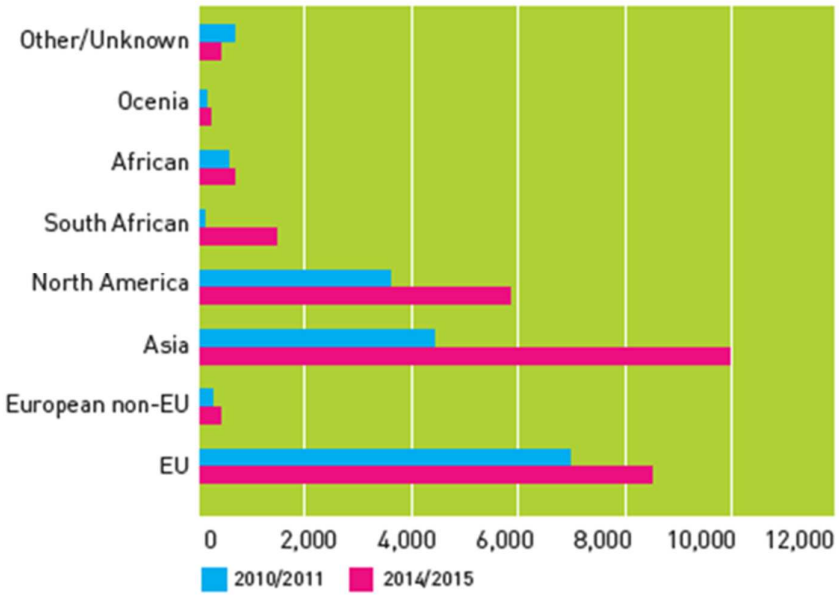
Ireland offers a novel context in which to analyse internationalisation. The absence of a broader multicultural outlook in society has repercussions for migrants at various scales. For Higher Education Institutions, internationalisation policies should encompass a broader scale of initiatives, not just in terms of enhancing mobility, but also in relation to fostering a tolerant, multicultural outlook. This involves fostering a culture that encourages Irish students to recognise and negotiate diversity, so that the labour of inter-cultural dialogue and interaction is not as one-sided as it currently stands. This might advance inter-cultural dialogue and tolerance beyond the university. Subsequent policy changes must emphasise the imperative to recognise international students as a complex and heterogeneous group who are also in need to support in order to overcome barriers to their social inclusion. Their experiences demonstrate the uneven impact of policies; internationalisation strategies cannot be disconnected from the broader national framework in which they operate.

**Tables**

Table One: Proportion of International Students at Irish Universities

| **Name of University** | **Proportion of International Students in Student Body** |
|---|---|
| University College Dublin | 25% |
| Trinity College Dublin | 16% |
| University College Cork | 15% |
| National University of Ireland, Maynooth | 15% |
| National University of Ireland, Galway | 12% |
| University of Limerick | 10% |

**Table Two: Origin by Domicile of International Students in Ireland, 2010/2011 and 2014/2015**




Source:

Department of Education and Skills, 'Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016-2020', 2016: p53

## References


Boucher, G.W. 1997. 'The Irish Are Friendly, But…', *Irish Council for International Students,* Dublin.

Boucher, G. W. 2008. 'Ireland's lack of a coherent integration policy', *Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative,* University College Dublin, 3: 1, 1 – 24.

Brooks, R. Walters, J. 2011. *Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education,* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke

Brooks, R. Waters, J. 2014. 'The Hidden Internationalism of Elite English Schools', *Sociology,* 49:2, 212 – 228

Brown, L. Holloway, I. 2008. 'The Adjustment Journey of International Postgraduates at an English university: An ethnographic study', *Journal of Research in International Education,* 7: 2, 232-249

Central Statistics Office 2014. *Profile 6: Migration: A Profile of Diversity in Ireland* www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/census2011profile6migrant_diversity-aprofileofdiversityinireland/ Accessed September 20th 2015

Central Statistics Office, 2016. *Population and Migration Estimates 2016.* Available Online: http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/pme/populationandmigrationestimatesapril2016/ Accessed: 07/09/2016

De Vita, G. Case, P. 2003. 'Rethinking the internationalisation agenda in UK higher education', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27:4, 383-398

Department of Education and Skills, 2011. *National Strategy for Education to 2030.* Report of the Strategy Group, Department of Education and Skills, Dublin, Ireland. Available: http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_strategy_for_higher_education_2030.pdf

Department of Education and Skills, 2016. *Irish Educated, Globally Connected: An International Education Strategy for Ireland, 2016-2020.* Dublin, Ireland. Available: http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf

Department of Justice and Equality, 2014. *Immigration Data.* Available online: https://www.kildarestreet.com/wrans/?id=2014-07-17a.1608#g1610.r Accessed: 11/09/2016

Education in Ireland, 2017. Non-EU Undergraduate Tuition Costs: http://www.educationinireland.com/en/How-Do-I-Apply-/Tuition-Costs-Scholarships/Fees-for-Non-EU-Students/Non-EU-Undergraduate-Tuition-Costs.html Accessed: 04/08/2017

Fincher, R, Shaw, K. 2009. 'The unintended segregation of trans-national students in central Melbourne', *Environment and Planning A,* 41, 1884 – 1902

Fincher, R. 2011. 'Cosmopolitan or ethnically identified selves? Institutional expectations and the negotiated identities of international students', *Social and Cultural Geography,* 12:8, 905-927

Fincher, R. Iveson, K. Leitner, H. Preston, V. 2014. 'Planning in the multicultural city: Celebrating diversity or reinforcing difference?', *Progress in Planning,* 92, 1 – 55.

Findlay, Allan M., Russell King, Fiona M. Smith, Alistair Geddes, and Ronald Skeldon. 2012 'World Class? An Investigation of Globalisation, Difference and International Student Mobility.' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37: 1, 118–131.

Gray, B. 2006. 'Migrant Integration Policy: A Nationalist Fantasy of Management and Control?', *Translocations,* 1:1, 118-138

Gilmartin, M. 2015. *Ireland and Migration in the twenty-first century.* Manchester University Press: Manchester

Glynn, I. Kelly, T. MacÉinrí, P. 2013. *Irish Emigration in an Age of Austerity.* Available online: www.ucc.ie/en/media/research/emigre/Emigration_in_an_age_of_austerity_final.pdf

Glynn, I. 2014. 'An Overview of Ireland's Integration Policies', *INTERACT: Researching Third Country Nationals Integration as a Three Way Process – Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration.* European University Institute: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

Higher Education Authority, 2016. 'Domicility of Origin of All Full-Time Students in all HEA Funded Institutions 2014/2015', Available Online: www.hea.ie/node/1557 Accessed: 09/092016

Holton, M. Riley, M. 2013. 'Student Geographies: Exploring the Diverse Geographies of Students and Higher Education', *Geography Compass,* 7: 1, 61 – 74

Irish Council for International Students, 2012. 'Response to the GNIB doubling of visa fees', Available: http://www.icosirl.ie/eng/policy/docs/201211_ICOS_Letter_re_fee_increase.pdf

Irish Council for International Students, 2016. 'Student statistics', Available online: www.icosirl.ie/student_information/student_statistics.html. Accessed: 11/09/2016

Joppke, C. 2007. 'Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe', *Western European Politics,* 30: 1, 1-22

King, R. Raghuram, P. 2013. 'International Student Migration: Mapping the Field and New Research Agendas', *Population, Space and Place,* 19, 127-137

Lentin, A. 2008. *Racism,* Oneworld Publications: Oxford

MacÉinrí, P. 2007. 'The Challenge of Migrant Integration in Ireland', *International Journal on Multicultural Societies,* 9:1, 75-90

MacÉinrí, P. White, A. 2008. 'Immigration into the Republic of Ireland: a bibliography of recent research', *Irish Geography,* 41:2, 151 - 179

McGinnity, F. O'Connell, P. Quinn, E. Williams, J. 2006. *Migrants' Experiences of Racism and Discrimination in Ireland: Results of a survey conducted by The Economic and Social Research Institute for The European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia,* Economic and Social Research Institute

McDowell, L 2009. 'Old and New European Economic Migrants: Whiteness and Managed Migration Policies', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 35: 1, 19-36

Madge, C. Raghuram, P. Noxolo, P. 2015. 'Conceptualising international education: from international student to international study', *Progress in Human Geography,* 1-21, DOI: 10.1177/0309132514526442

McDowell, L. 2009. 'Old and New European Economic Migrants: Whiteness and Managed Migration Policies', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 35: 1, 19-36

Mitchell, K. 2003. 'Educating the national citizen in neoliberal times: from the multicultural self to the strategic cosmopolitan', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 28: 4, 387 - 403

National University of Ireland Galway 2014. *About the University.* www.nuigalway.ie/about-us/who-we-are/about-the-university/html. Accessed 13/09/2015

Raghuram, P. 2013. 'Theorising the Spaces of Student Migration', *Population, Space and Place,* 19, 138-154

Riaño, Yvonne & Piguet, Etienne (2016): "International Student Migration". In *Oxford Bibliographies in Geography*. Ed. Barney Warf. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ruhs, M. 2009. 'Ireland: From Rapid Immigration to Recession', *Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS),* Oxford University

Shachar, Ayelet. 2006. The Race for Talent. *New York University Law Review*, 81: 148–206.

Trinity College Dublin 2015. *About Trinity.* www.tcd.ie/about/ Accessed 13/09/2015

University College Cork, 2014. *About UCC: Facts and Figures.* www.ucc.ie/en/about/ Accessed 13/09/2015

University College Cork Strategic Plan 2013-2017, accessed at http://www.ucc.ie/en/strategicplanning/2013/, accessed 31/05/13

UCC International, June 2014, 'Student words to describe Ireland': https://uccinternational.wordpress.com/2014/06/03/student-words-to-describe-ucc/, Accessed January 23 2015

University College Dublin 2014. *About UCD: UCD by Numbers.* www.ucd.ie/about-ucd/about/ucdbynumbers. Accessed 13/09/2015

University of Limerick, 2014. *A Profile of UL,* www.ul.ie/pressoff/ul-profile. Accessed 13/09/2015

University of Maynooth, 2014. *Maynooth At a Glance.* www.maynoothuniversity.ie/about-us/maynooth-glance. Accessed 13/09/2015

Valentine, G. 2008. 'The ties that bind: Towards Geographies of Intimacy', *Geography Compass,* 2:6, 2097-2110

Valentine, G. 2010. 'Prejudice: Re-thinking geographies of oppression', *Social and Cultural Geography,* 11:6, 519-537

Van Mol, C. Michielsen, J. 2015. 'The Reconstruction of a Social Network Abroad. An Analysis of the Social Interaction Patterns of ERASMUS Students', *Mobilities,* 10: 3, 423 - 444

Waters, J. 2006b. 'Geographies of cultural capital: education, international migration, and family strategies between Hong Kong and Canada', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 31 (2), 179 – 192

Waters, J.L. 2012. 'Geographies of International Education: Education and the Reproduction of Social (Dis)Advantage', *Geography Compass,* 6:3, 123-136

Yin, R.K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* Sage: Thousand Oaks